



Congressman Tim Bishop

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BISHOP FIGHTS FOR CLEAN WATER FOR LONG ISLAND

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Rep. Tim Bishop (NY-01) welcomed this week's passage of three pieces of legislation to improve water quality and infrastructure for Long Island and the rest of the country. The nation faces a clean water crisis that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has warned has the potential to erase the water quality gains made over the past 35 years under the Clean Water Act. Bishop serves on the Water Resources and Environment Subcommittee of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. He has been working with other members of the committee to make sure this critical legislation supports the priorities of Long Island.

"This legislation is extremely important to Long Island, which is surrounded by water on three sides," Bishop said. "Clean water doesn't just happen—it takes dedicated resources and oversight. Unfortunately some in Washington, including the Administration, have repeatedly blocked legislation for clean water. These bills will support local governments' efforts to keep our water safe and clean."

The Reauthorizing Clean Water State Revolving Loan Fund (H.R. 720) would direct \$14 billion over four years for state and local governments to addresses critical water infrastructure needs. The Fund also fosters local economic development by helping pay for work on wastewater treatment facilities. The previous Congress slashed funding for the Clean Water Revolving Fund by 34 percent, and the President has proposed cutting it again under his 2008 budget proposal.

"Each year, many Long Islanders – and millions of other Americans – are sickened by swimming in water contaminated by sewer overflows," Bishop told members of Congress during a speech on the floor. "The impact of such contamination to our region and coastline can be devastating to the fishing and tourist economies that depend upon clean water and healthy beaches."

The Reauthorizing Sewer Overflow Control Grants (H.R. 569) would authorize \$1.5 billion in grants to local communities over the next five years to construct treatment works to deal with sewer overflows. This bill is crucial because sewer overflows represent a major public health hazard. According to the EPA, an estimated 850 billion gallons of raw sewage and industrial waste escape each year, much of it into public waters. Sewer overflow control grants were authorized for 2002 and 2003, but Congress never appropriated any funds.

"Many Americans do not become aware of sewage leaks until they show up to a closed beach," said Bishop. "Worse yet, they are made ill because many sewer systems do not routinely monitor to detect sewer overflows or report those that do occur to environmental or health agencies."

The Reauthorizing Pilot Program for Increasing Usable Water Supply (H.R. 700) would authorize \$125 million to fund projects that increase usable water supply by encouraging innovation in water reclamation, reuse and conservation. This pilot program was authorized for 2002 through 2004, but Congress never appropriated any funds.

These three water quality bills, which have been referred to the U.S. Senate upon passage in the House, will help ensure clean water, create jobs, and stimulate local economies.

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